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SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UN TO COMBAT SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN THE MONUC PEACEKEEPING OPERATION

REF: STATE 57469

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Major DRC NGOs acknowledged that the incidence of sexual exploitation and abuse cases has dropped in 2008 compared to 2007. MONUC's Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) told us, however, that SEA allegations in 2009 are trending higher. The CDU maintained that there is a pattern of certain countries not having provided SEA training prior to the troops' arrival in the DRC. The CDU recommended a system of in-country court martial, whereby the accused would face a military court from his country, but the trial would take place in the DRC. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) PolCouns met separately with Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, Executive Director of the NGO Voice of the Voiceless, and with Georges Kapiamba, National Vice-President of the African Association for the Defense of Human Rights. Both noted that the number of citizen complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) cases was virtually non-existent, although Chebeya warned that there were certainly "hidden cases." Kapiamba praised MONUC's efforts over the past year to address SEA problems. Chebeya was also positive, but he noted that many Congolese doubted whether guilty UN troops, who had been sent home, were really prosecuted in their home countries.

¶3. (U) MONUC provided us with various documents to highlight training and punitive measures the organization has undertaken in the past year. MONUC reported that the number of Category 1 (most serious) SEA allegations in 2008 dropped to 38 from 47 in 2007. During calendar year 2008, MONUC repatriated 7 members of its military and police components on disciplinary grounds, "mainly following allegations of SEA." MONUC's Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) directly trained 3,620 peacekeepers in 2008, with a total of 31,097 receiving training through coordinated initiatives with MONUC partners. The CDU regularly makes visits to the field to conduct assessments. The MONUC SEA Focal Point network continues to assist the CDU and senior management in training. In summer 2008 the SRSG established a Conduct and Discipline Advisory Committee, comprising a multi-division effort, to reinforce MONUC's commitment to fight SEA.

¶4. (SBU) During a meeting with poloff, Yewande Odia, Head of the CDU, acknowledged that, even though SEA allegations had declined in 2008 compared to 2007, there have been 22 SEA allegations reported already in 2009. Odia noted that there is a pattern of "some countries not providing thorough SEA training to their troops," because there is a much higher incidence of SEA allegations "associated with certain contingents." Odia also lamented that the number of investigators in the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in the DRC had been reduced from 9 to 2, making it harder to initiate investigations. Odia, recognizing the perception that many UN SEA perpetrators were not prosecuted in their home countries, suggested an in-country court martial procedure. In this model, military judges from the concerned country would travel to the DRC to hold court martial, thus increasing transparency and encouraging in-country testimony.

¶5. (SBU) Summary: As the UN's largest PKO in an enormous country

with poor infrastructure, it remains particularly challenging to monitor the conduct of MONUC's military and civilian components. MONUC, in our opinion, is doing all it possibly can to provide training, monitor conduct, and punish perpetrators. To end a sense of impunity, however, a system of in-country court martial should be explored.

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